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Chapter 1

Falling, falling, deeper yet deeper. With my mortal hands I cradle the last bit of humanity I had left, as it escaped my grasp like petals in the wind. My sanity wisped around me as if it were streams of paper, yet there was no party to be held.

My day started as a normal one, I had waken up, eaten breakfast, and read the mail. I had felt like a human then, if not for later. It was only until I went outside to get groceries, that I realized something was wrong, horribly wrong.

I was a lone human, not particularly surrounded by people, nor animals alike. Not that I had minded, be it as it was, living species never piqued my interests, so to say. I simply was sufficed by working as a cog in society's machine, serving them, and not getting in their way. Many would call me the pinnacle of a human, while others would scoff and call me a burden. After all, what is a human, without its capability to grow bonds with those of its kind.

Bonds would have proven helpful in this situation, as I sank to my knees, coughing and yelling for help as an unknown black liquid spilled out of my mouth. But people merely watched, or was it that they couldn't move? I was a bit too busy dying in the middle of the street to notice if time was passing or not. But with a last gasping breath, I toppled, and I was falling.

In my passing moments, I was shown my life, from birth to then. God, was I supposed to regret? Sure, it was dead boring, but was I supposed to regret how I had served? Hell, what was I supposed to feel in this moment? I reached out my hand to graze a memory, my humanity dissipating faster as the warmth of the past tingled my hand, a sad smile forcing its way onto my features. Say, was this how it felt to die? How oddly soothing.

Repressed memories also wormed their way before me, my parents fighting, children bullying, and the people I've known disappearing

from me. And that's when I felt something. The tiny gate, holding all my emotions at bay to have my body serve its purpose broke, and I cried. For the first time in years, tears flooded out of their ducts and into the never-ending swirling sky. Oh what had I become, but a husk of what I once was. No love, no friendship, and no family. I was a failure of humanity, and a peak of working. But god, did I now wish I were opposite.

Sobs wrecked my body, and I just wished for this all to end. My hands cradled my eyes and I tried to look away from everything that I had once forgotten, but even behind closed eyes, they were there. My past was something that could never leave me, whatever I did..!

A thud.

It was loud, ear-splitting, but at the same time, soft enough to be humane. My tears felt like they had long dried, and my eyes were closed tight, with no memories flooding before them, although they were still in my head. What happened?

A click.

It was a sound I barely recognized, yet it was something I knew. A gun being loaded. In my country, they had long banned fire-arms. So had I been captured?

"Put the gun *down*, America." A heaving sigh, annoyance, and a hint of accent. I decided to peep through my fingers to see who was in my presence. And when I did, I almost immediately regretted it. I was sure I had gone insane.

It was but three figures, human in every way, shape, and form. Except for their colours and heads. God, what was this kind of monstrosity? They were countries, in every way, shape, and form, countries. One, I could recognize as America. I mean, who wouldn't know that unruly look, though I didn't remember a flag wearing sunglasses. Second was Germany, who donned a pair of reading glasses on his annoyed features. And last, one that hadn't made itself known, Russia. A soft ushanka made him stand out from the others, though his steely gaze would be enough to be an outsider.

Unbeknownst to me, I started to tremble. Was it fear? I don't know. I think the general shock of both dying and being faced with something inhumane was enough to reel me off the course of any emotion, but it didn't go unnoticed by them.

"It's a fucking alien! It's gonna eat our brains!" America almost shrieked, as he aimed his gun at me once again. Germany whacked his arm down and away from my figure, letting out another annoyed sigh. "I'm sure that if it were an 'alien', it wouldn't be scared at the sight of us." He glanced at me once again, before ripping the gun from America's hands. "This gun of yours probably isn't helping."

America's commotion had taken my attention away from Russia, who I only noticed was here because he squatted next to me, reaching for my hands. I let out a squeak, which immediately caught the attention of the other two. I clasped my hands together and held them in front of my face, staring at the hand hovering over mine. I then realized that he wasn't moving it, and lifted my gaze to look at him. He merely looked surprised, then drew his hand back to him and stood up.

"Get up." It wasn't a bark, nor was it in any way aggressive, yet it still brought shivers down my spine. I couldn't scramble to my feet faster, wobbling slightly as the rest of them watched my every movement. In the haste of it, I almost lost my balance, but none of them seemed to reach out to help me, so I just had to save myself from embarrassment on my own, forcing the red flush on my cheeks to die down.

"Where am I?" I croaked. My throat felt dry, rugged, almost. Had I not drank anything this morning? Oh god, am I dying? Am I dying again? What even happened? What will I- "You're uh, in our house." The now calmer America stated, subtly trying to reach back for his gun to no avail. "And how did I get here..?" I asked, following the movements of the gun cautiously, making sure that at no point it would be aimed at me.

"That's what *you're* going to tell *us*." Germany replied before America could get another word in, putting the gun on a shelf that the smaller country couldn't reach. "We found you this morning on

our kitchen floor, and we'd like to know how you got in."

"How I.. god I don't know.." I rubbed my nose, the cold of the vortex whispering back to me. What was I doing that morning, again? "I.. was at my home this morning, and then I-" my words died in my throat, how could I explain that? Did I die? Disappear? Travel universes? I think I *died*, I *must've* died, right? Not breathing means I'm dead, right? "-died?" for some reason, it felt like a lie.

The question in my tone didn't seem to still their distrust either. There was a long silence, before Germany pulled out a seat at their dinner table. "Please, sit. We'll discuss this step by step. *And you're going to tell us exactly what happened.*"

Chapter 2

And there I was, seated at the rectangular oak-wooden table, three countries staring back at me. In my hands I held a maroon cup, steaming with a piping hot substance of tea. I had to wonder, how did import work in this world? Was it something akin of giving gifts? Where did countries live?

"So," Germany started, pushing up his silver rimmed glasses as his brows furrowed. "Tell us what happened." They were willing to listen, at least. I didn't feel that they were as distrusting of me as they were before, seeing as I was just as confused as they were. Trailing my thumb over the rim of the mug, I started recounting my tale, as well as I could.

"I don't think I come from here." The words flooded out of my mouth before I could properly articulate them, and I was once again lost in my own thoughts, my surroundings fading away as the void returned to my head. "I haven't seen anyone that look akin to you, at least. I come from a world that's surrounded by people like me. This morning, I was doing my usual routine. I woke up, ate food, and went out to get groceries.. I think.. did I?" The void around me swirled, as if there was no answer lying within their dozens of layers. What happened? "..did I?" I repeated, lowering my gaze to my hands as I clenched them. "And after that I.." I remember shocked faces, and my own coughing rang in my ears, but what happened? Did I die? Did I get a coughing spree? ".. I don't know.. but I think I died.."

And yet, I felt like a lie once again. Was it because I did not know the truth, or because I knew it couldn't- no, it *shouldn't* be true? Because here I was at the dinner table, feeling the heat of my drink and the tension of the others. I felt muscles move under my skin and my lungs expand and shrink as I breathed. What was I?

"So you're dead?" America repeated, his balled fists clenching and releasing as he gazed at his friends with wide eyes "I told you it was

an alien—" "-just use she, you benevolent prick." Germany shot back, his fingers pinching the bridge of his nose. "And she's not an alien.. god.." the black-red-yellow country dropped his hand on the table with a soft thud, his searching eyes reaching mine, as if he were hoping to find some hidden secrets there. But there was nothing. "..So what do we do with you?" a soft mutter, yet it felt like a shout in the endless darkness. The silence that followed it was deafening, and I couldn't help but avoid all their gazes, picking at my nails subconsciously, hoping for a way out.

"Simple, we keep it- her here." A voice that hadn't spoken up before let out his thoughts, and I feebly lifted my head to look at Russia. He wasn't looking at me, but at the other countries, who gave him plain, thoughtful looks "..I wouldn't feel good about kicking someone out, especially at this kind of year, either.. but.." America murmured, turning his gaze towards Germany, who merely grimaced. I could tell there were thousands of thoughts spinning around in the country's head, and I could almost assure none of them were good. "We'll discuss this," his gaze flickered over to me, before looking back at his roommates "..In private, please. Come to my room. Stranger, don't break anything." They all turned towards me once more, as I nodded silently, staring at the tea that was slowly growing cold. With a few wordless shuffles, and scrapings of chairs against the marble floor, they left the room, and me, alone. And there I was again, trapped within my thoughts.

My first complaint with this whole situation was that no one asked my opinion on the whole 'living with countries' thing. Of course, I had nowhere to go, and yes, it was still winter, but I would've liked to get my opinion in. For all I knew, they were dangerous. I mean, have you seen the history with Russia? I'm not sure about this. My second complaint is that, well, let's be honest, where was I? I kind of would rather be home right now, eating some broccoli I got from the store and binging whatever show there was marathoning on BBC. Although the surroundings that I used to live in faded from my mind, I couldn't help but wish to be there again.

Gripping the cup within my hands tighter, I stared deep into the distance, raking my memory. I hadn't realized the three had come into the room, staring at me staring at the wall. Germany cleared

his throat and I shot up, spilling some lukewarm tea on the back of my hand. "F-Fuck I'm sorry-" I squeaked, wiping the spilled liquid with the hem of my sleeve. They took seat back in their designated places, and Germany folded his hands.

"We'd be willing to let you stay here." Germany began his spiel, straightening his shoulders as he looked at me with an authoritarian gaze. "That is, until we see you are fit to take care of yourself, or until you're able to head back home. Does that sound like a deal?" He reached out his hand, and I stared at it for a second, before reaching over to shake it. "S-sure." Germany seemed pleased, before asking me another question, one I wasn't sure how to answer.

"But first, *who are you?*"

Chapter 3

Germany slammed his open palms on his desk as he hunched over it, before turning to Russia with an outstretched hand. "Can you *not* decide things without discussing it with us? She's probably gotten her hopes up by now." An exasperated chatter left the country's mouth as Russia simply smirked at his humbled state. America quickly looked between the two, then put his hand gingerly on Germany's back.

"Now Germany," America started soothingly, but Germany cut him off just as fast. "No- no 'now Germany', We have a serious problem here. We have a stranger who is in our house. She thinks she's dead which she's *clearly* not, and none of us know where she came from." He rested his hands on America's shoulder "Our main course of action shouldn't be how to house her, it should be how to get *rid* of her." Germany felt a tug on the collar of his blouse as he was pulled away from America.

"Calm down, Germany." Russia grumbled, letting go of the collar and placing his hand on his hip. "I don't know why you're so worked up about this, she's clearly helpless. And as America said, we can't just get rid of her. Blyat, there's going to be a snowstorm next Tuesday, I couldn't bear to let anyone out during such a time." Germany sighed, sinking to his knees as his palms wringed his eyes, letting out a painful moan.

"Listen, Germany." Russia squatted down in front of the smaller country, who merely looked up at him with a pained expression "I know you're dead tired working so hard, but we can't let an innocent person suffer." He rested his palm on Germany's shoulder, giving a supportive rub with his thumb "We'll make sure she stays out of your hair most of the time, and she'll be able to go home in no time."

"Or she stays forever!" America sighed dreamily, his hand thumping

on his chest "You know, in the fanfics I've read-" "-not the time to talk about fanfiction, America." Germany grunted wearily, pushing himself up from the ground and dusting off his pants. "Okay, so how do we go about this?" He turned towards Russia as the smaller country let his arms fall in a defeated manner. Russia let out a low hum, tugging at the ears of his ushanka "I say we keep her here until she's able to go back where she came from." Germany let out a low hum of agreement, then turned toward America, his brow raised. "And what do you have to say, about this."

"I don't trust her." America dropped, causing the other two to give him their full attention "I mean.." America waved his arms slightly, before dropping them at his sides again. "Sure, she seems harmless, but where did she come from?" "She already said-" "-No, I don't mean that." America cut Germany off, who's expression turned from taken aback, to a frown. "Then what *do* you mean." America scratched his arm, trying to avoid their gazes.

"Don't you think that.. with the current circumstances.. it's a little weird?" He raised his head to look them in the eye, growing more confident by the second. "I mean.. We were just living our lives with a normal schedule, and a normal routine, and just *suddenly* there's a human on our kitchen floor claiming she died. Doesn't that seem a little odd to you?"

"Of course it does. But I don't think that we should distrust her because of it, I mean, she's just as confused as we are, albeit a little scared." Germany shrugged as Russia stood back in his stoic form, unmoving and thoughtful. "..I still think she's some kind of alien." America looked away as Germany let out a pained sigh, but America continued anyway "She has to be otherworldly of some sort.. I mean.. She already stated that she hasn't seen anyone like us before, so she's clearly not from here.."

Before Germany could stop his final words, America's eyes grew cold and distant, and he reached for his back pocket. "I'll be watching her, and if she sets one step amiss, I'll be turning her into swiss cheese." He twirled his handgun in his hand, before turning away from the others and pushing open the door. "Well, shall we see how our guest is doing?"

Well, not that great, apparently.

America, Germany, and Russia shared worried glances as they watched her figure tremble, gazing at the wall with such an intent passion they'd almost think she was trying to drill holes into it. "I-is she okay?" America muttered to Russia, cocking his new gun cautiously. Russia shrugged, removing the fire-arm from America's feeble grip and placing it on the cabinet with the other.

Germany couldn't help but pity the stranger in their house. Yes, he didn't know her name, nor who she was, but she almost looked like a deer in the headlights, hunted by some evil man hiding in the bushes. What must she be thinking right now?

Germany's gaze trailed to the table where her cup stood, her knuckles almost turning white with the force she was gripping it. He cleared his throat to get her attention, but almost regretted it as she spilled her hot drink over herself.

A curse and a sleeve wipe, and the spilled drink was gone, but Germany couldn't help but feel that he had intruded in an area he was not allowed to be. He wished to know what would come of this.

And so he spoke.

Chapter 4

Who am I?

Yesterday, I would have been able to tell them. But now, now when I know how truly boring my life was, who was I? Let's start with introductory words, right?

"I'm-uh.. My name is (Y/N) (L/N), I'm 20 years old and I come from (Hometown)." I stated in a matter-of-fact tone, picking at my nails as I avoided their questioning gazes. "Well, it's great to meet you, (Y/N), my name is Germany, and these two-" his hand motioned over to the two other countryhumans, and he coughed slightly "-are America and Russia." *I knew that.* I almost replied, but I simply held my tongue, and bowed my head.

"Thank you for having me." A polite, and warm smile pulled its way onto my face, yet the others seemed less than impressed. An awkward silence bestowed upon us, no one willing to make eye contact, nor speak anything out of place. Finally, America pushed his chair back, a concluding look dawning on his face. "I have to make a call, so excuse me." He rushed out of the room without letting anyone stop him. As my eyes trailed his back, Germany let out a cough, causing me to turn back to him.

"I think it's best you sleep on the couch." The country murmured, earning a well-meaning nod from Russia "I'll go and fetch some blankets, and maybe a book to read? I don't know what you like to do.." he trailed off, pushing up his crystalline glasses, and sighed. "Excuse me." Hasted steps, one, two.. and he had gone. It was just me and Russia now.

Russia didn't speak much, I had noted. He had simply been watching this entire conversation, yet his mere presence was enough to send shivers down my spine. He placed his elbows on the table, leaning his body forward and resting his head on the back of his hands, watching, waiting. I didn't dare speak, I simply let his

eyes glide over my face, hoping that he'd find what he was looking for. And he did, so it seemed. He let out a low hum, akin to a sigh, and leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms.

"I think you're harmless." Russia's deep voice almost made me jump in my seat, and I looked at him in confusion. "I.. guess I am?" my voice was barely above a squeak, and it only seemed to amuse the large man more, a crooked smirk dawning on his face. "I don't trust you, but you're harmless, you'll be just fine." I opened my mouth, but was at a loss for words. A slow blink from him as he cocked his eyebrow caused me to shut my mouth again, turning my gaze back to my hands.

"I'm back." Germany cut through my gathering thoughts, and he stood next to me, holding a book in his hands. "You can read this if you'd like, I also have a notebook, oh and I hope your blanket is thick enough, it's all on the couch and-" Germany rambled on, causing a smile to tremble on my face. "..Thank you ever so much, I don't know how I could ever repay this kindness." It stopped the country from his spiel, a flustered blush dawning on his face. "It's quite alright, it's just until you head home, anyway." He turned, giving a quick motion with his fingers to signal I should follow him. "Come, I'll show you around."

I sat on the fluffy white cotton couch, entangled in the soft blanket Germany had gifted me. Russia sat at the other side of the couch, mindlessly flipping between channels, seemingly hoping for something of interest. I flipped open the notebook that have been given to me, rolling the jet-black ballpoint pen between my fingers as my other hand brushed the feather-soft paper, hoping for something to write.

But my brain didn't line up with my hands. As my pen glided over the paper, nothing seemed coherent, short sentences of 'Who am I?' 'What is this?' 'Where am I?' questions, but no answers. I finally gave up, letting out a soft sigh and tapping my pen for a new idea, tiny specks of ink forming its way onto the paper.

And before I knew it, I was drawing. What was I drawing? I don't know. The void, feathers, smily faces, and pain. Everything my mind was thinking about was splattered onto the page in an

entourage of black. It was then that I noticed Russia's gaze was pointed at my paper. I lifted my head, a faint blush of embarrassment tinting my cheeks as I spoke up. "Is.. Is something wrong?"

Russia slowly shook his head, then locked eyes with me. Oh *fuck*, eye-contact. My only weakness. Well, that isn't true, I have many weaknesses, I am a weak little man. I then realized that the large country reached out his hands, waiting patiently. "May I see it?" he murmured, his fingers twitching slightly. Carefully, I placed the notebook into his grip, and he took his sweet time looking it over, a calm, speculating look on his face. His fingers trailed the places where I pushed the pen a little too hard, before he closed the notebook, raising his head to look back to the TV.

He handed me the book back, his touch lingering on it for just a longer moment that comfortable, before he sank back into the couch, letting a low hum escape his breath. "..You probably have a lot to think about." He stated, turning the TV off with a single click. "I'll leave you to it." I almost wanted to call him back as he left the room, question him about what he meant, but I was left alone, alone with my thoughts, and the void.

The void seemed to snicker at me, swirling around in the shadows of the room, teasing night-time but not giving me the proper will to stay awake as I usually would. I turned my gaze back in the notebook. Brushing my finger over its soft binder, exhaustion spilled over me. I simply laid my head on the armrest, and wished for sleep to come with peace and kindness.

But sleep was not all I would have that night.

Chapter 5

What did I dream? I would tell you if I could, but even that was a jumbled mess in my head. Swirling, knocking things over and laughing at me. I dreamt of the people I had met, but were they people, or an aftermath of my passing? No one knew.

Even now, I believe I was asleep, floating back in the void as it teased me. It didn't show me my memories, nor did it take my humanity, but it was around me. I floated in it, and watched it swirl around me. Holding me up, yet also weighing me down. I don't know if I could breathe, I don't know if I could see, but I could hear.

I could hear murmurs, clanging metal doors. Perhaps there were cars passing by in the distance? God if I knew. I wanted to call out, to hear my voice, but with the lack of breathing, using air to make sounds wasn't exactly in my row of capabilities right now. But then I heard something. It was closer than any murmurs, hell, it felt like it was right next to my ears. A crash.

And it woke me up.

I shot up, wide-eyed as an unidentified figure cussed. Rain pattered onto the floor as the person moved its way toward me, its white eyes gleaming with the little light the night offered it. I scrambled backwards, my back hitting the armrest as I fought desperately to untangle myself. My fight or flight instincts screamed flight, but I froze as the figure started talking, slowly trudging towards me, a sharp object clearly rolling in his hands, *a knife*.

"Calm down, lass." An unmistakably British accent rolled off – what I could assume to be – his tongue as he got closer, lifting his hand above his head. "It'll only be a second, an then I'll get paid, and you'll be dead, sound good?" He got even closer, and my trembling hands gripped my comforter tighter, my eyes darting around as I looked for an escape. But all I could see was his face. God, was this another one of them? Which country was he? The shadows made

his coloration almost impossible to decipher, but it seemed like something akin to a red cross was slashed across his face.

"Now, what are ye lookin'-" he couldn't finish his sentence. A door slammed behind me, and a known voice called out. "...And what do you think you're doing?" Germany. He stood behind me, his arms crossing as a scowl drew on his face, causing the unidentified man to stumble back, dropping the knife with a loud clatter. "Ey, bruv, I was just doin' what America told me, he said-" "Just get out." A sharp bark cut off the man once again, causing him to throw one last look at me, and defeatedly leave the house. In an instant, Germany fussed over me.

"He didn't hurt you, did he?" The German muttered, hastily checking my arms over. I shook my head, dazed in a shock. What the *hell* was that? The country rested his hands on my shoulders, letting out a defeated sigh, before pulling me up to my feet. "...Yeah, I'm not letting you sleep here while the window's broken."

And I was guided away from the soft comforter, I realized where he was pulling me. *His room*. Now, normally, this would be a romantic gesture, but in this moment, as my shock faded away, it felt daunting. The fact that I had to stay in here was frankly terrifying, and as I was sat onto his bed, I couldn't help but ask.

"But what about you?"

Germany threw me a confused, then amused glance. "It's alright, I wasn't planning on sleeping tonight, anyway." I almost felt intrusive, but I slowly nodded, pushing myself into the deepest end of his bed and curling into the corner.

I wish sleep would come easy, for once.

But it didn't. As to be expected after such an event. I fell in and out of sleep, a headache pulling at my brain, and my thoughts pestering my ears. I never noticed if I was asleep, just that my eyes kept peeking open and closing again, praying, wishing for it all to end. But as I laid there expectantly, a new sound reached my senses, and I peeked open an eye. It was clearly a snore, but in my disarray, I forgot from who.

Germany was fast asleep on his desk, his neck craned uncomfortably as his head rested on his arms. And I had to be honest, that hurt my heart. Now I felt like a huge asshole, claiming his bed while he was so kind to me. I had to do something. I tiptoed next to him, giving his shoulder a gentle shake. He raised his head blearily, blinking slowly. "Eh.. did you want something, hmm?" I clenched my fists, and prodded him again. "Please.. take your bed and sleep.." Germany twisted his back to look at the bed, then shook his head. "No.. no.. guest sleep.." He trailed off, clearly about to fall asleep once more.

I let out a pained sigh, then pulled him out of his chair, to his confused surprise. I pushed him onto his bed, staring down at him with a pained expression. He stared back blankly, then lifted his finger to point at his dresser. "Okay, here's what we're gonna do." I walked over to it, waiting for his instruction. "I've got some pillows in there, we can use 'em to make a border, then we can both sleep." I did as he told, pulling out the plush pillows with a soft thud, and placing them between us. He seemed satisfied, and pulled his blanket over his shoulder as I laid down on the other side of the wall, watching his back carefully.

"Good night, (Y/N)." "Thank you, Germany. Good night."

Chapter 6

Maybe sleeping next to someone else was all I needed to have a full night's rest after all. Though it wasn't romantic, like those stories I had read as a pre-teen, it was comforting. In my subconscious state, I snuggled against the pillow barrier, pulling it away as the night drew into dawn. However, it was a grave mistake, because when I awoke, I was *stuck*.

It wasn't that Germany was holding me in the same way as I was snuggling the barrier, or that I buried myself under the pillows like a pillow fort, but it was that Germany apparently didn't make himself *small* when he slept. His arm was chucked over my throat, trapping me against the mattress as he starfish-position dreamt about whatever he was dreaming about. His legs hooked me down to the bed, fully imprisoning me to the soft confinements.

And there I lay, wide awake, as the man beside me snored like an annoyed bear cub. In theory, I could writhe myself loose and speedwalk away from the bed to ensure my escaping, but the chance of me waking Germany up was too high, and I wouldn't want to be such a twat to awaken him who has so graciously lent me his sleeping space. So, I waited.

And waited.

The clock now read 6 AM, I had laid there for 2 hours, and Germany showed no signs of waking. My head tried to formulate a plan, but all I could think about was how hot it was getting and how the country was kind of starting to choke me with his weight. I had to break free, or else I might die again-

I gingerly wrapped my hands around his arm, lifting it ever so slightly and ducking my head under it, grateful to breathe. However, this didn't seem to please the sleeping dog, and he let out a low grumble, rolling around and wrapping his arm around my

back. Okay, now I was *really* stuck, and now I was also being softly squeezed like a teddy bear.

But hey.. at least I wasn't choking.

I let out a defeated sigh, resting my head against his chest and hoping that this movement would cause him to move again.

Nope.

I finally gave up, closing my eyes, and letting rest overtake me once more. A faint blush tinted my cheeks. God, I really am weak aren't I? I can't even get someone off me while they're asleep.

When I awoke, the clock read 7:30 AM. Germany had rolled off me, the space in my arms now feeling oddly cold and vacant. I watched his back move as he breathed, blinking the sleep out of my eyes. Carefully, I pushed myself up, turning to the side of the bed as my bare feet hit the cold spruce floor, wriggling my toes to get blood back in them.

My eyes gazed at my lap as I exhaled, my breath disturbing the particles in the air that the soft beams of light were kind enough to show. I watched it swirl around me, reminded of the void, but the void wasn't there in this early morning. Probably still asleep, itself.

I stood up, stretched my arm above my head and gazed around the room. That's when my eyes caught something on the chair in the corner. A woollen sweater, black jeans and a note. I picked up the note, crinkling it in my hands slightly as I read over the words, a neat, yet hasty handwriting in black, no doubt the same pen that I had used last night.

Good morning (Y/N),

I know you're going to be awake before me, so I got you some fresh clothes that Belarus has left here before. I hope they fit you. Feel free to use the shower, but make sure not to use all the warm water. Use any products you like. After you're done, leave your old clothes in the white and yellow basket in the bathroom. I'll wash them.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Germany.

I folded the note as I took a look at the clothes that had been placed. They seemed to be my fit, how lucky. I picked them up, my skin prickling as the soft cotton tickled it, a smile dancing on my face. They were so kind to me already.. I believe I'll have a good time here, until I leave. Gripping the clothes tighter, I quietly left the room, letting the door fall behind me with a soft click.

And then I was once again faced by memories of yesterday. Shards of glass from the backdoor's window gleamed on the kitchen floor. My soft blanket had been tossed next to the couch, the pillows strewn right next to it. I trembled for a moment, the soft tweeting of birdsong barely reaching my ears as I stared at the sight. I could almost imagine the figure and his knife standing there again, more ominous than he had been before.

I shook my head, the darkness of the void that started to accumulate disappearing, the warm light of morning cascading through the windows again as I saw the living room as what it was. Squaring my shoulders, I walked right past it, opening the bathroom door and heading in, locking it behind me. The marbled blue floor beneath my feet felt cold and uninviting, and as I took my clothes off and looked in the mirror, I frowned. Had I always looked like this?

Nevertheless, I was in the warm shower a few minutes later, water droplets hitting my (S/C) skin and dripping down to the drain below. I scanned the shower gels for something I could use. My decision ended on something that smelled familiar. Maybe it was Germany's? He had been quite close to me this night, after all. It was an Argan oil and apricot concoction, something like I had in my shower at home. I made sure to use only as much as necessary, not wanting to overuse something that I wasn't even sure I could use at all.

It was a measly ten minutes before I finished, feeling as fresh as I ever had. I dried myself with the towel Germany had given me, and dressed into my new clothes. They fit perfectly, hugging my every curve as if I had bought them myself. Though I had to be honest, orange turtlenecks weren't exactly my forte, it did feel nice to wear

something out of my style once in a while. I stared at myself in wonder, then shook my head, gathering my dirty clothes and placing them where Germany had said.

I sucked in my breath, and opened the bathroom door back to the living room, the steam of the hot water leaving with me, and the cold morning air hitting my soft face once again.

"Hey."

I froze for a second, then turned toward America, who stared at me with tired, half lidded eyes. Under his arm was a change of clothes, and he quirked his eyebrow as I checked him over. He had an.. interesting attire. A black shirt with 'LMAO' on it's front, while he donned wide dark blue pyjama pants under it. I looked back at him, a hint of worry, and then politeness in my eyes.

"Good morning, America." I smiled, and he looked away towards the mess in the living room. "..You're going to clean that up, right?" America growled under his breath, straightening his pose as he pushed himself off of the wall he was leaning on. "I would hate to let Germany do it, after all he's done for you." And with those words, he slinked into the bathroom, pulling the door closed with a bang and leaving me in shocked silence. *Definitely* not a morning person.

I sighed, combed my hand through my hair and nodded. Yeah, he's right. That's what I should do.

Hello youngsters.

This is the one, and probably the only author's note I'll do in this book. So don't worry.

My name is Red, and I hope you are enjoying this fanfiction I've done so far.

If you have any complaints, please let me know.

The reason I have started this author's note is to give you all a message, and some extra things.

I have a storyline in mind for this book, however, I am very willing to take requests for certain characters if people so wish. So, if you have a certain character you want a chapter to be dedicated to, let me know, and I'll see if it can be fit into the story I am wanting to tell.

Secondly, I have drawn a referece sheet for what I like to think the reader looks like. However, she is designed as a countryhuman. I do talk about the reader as a normal human in this book, but I did feel the need to share this, since I am very proud of my work.

[image]

If you have any questions, please comment them, or send me a PM, if that's what you'd rather have.

Without further ado,

Namaste.

Chapter 7

The soft brushing of the wind through the few leaves in the trees was all I could hear as I stood still. A few more heartbeats, and then the rushing of water joined it, snapping me from my trance. I sighed, shook my head, and slowly made my way over to the couch, lifting the dropped ivory-coloured blanket with one graceful swoop and folding it, placing it back on my former bed with the pillows in tow. I patted it a few times, before standing up straight and stretching out, my sleeve dropping down.

Now for that glass..

I carefully walked toward it, making sure I was a safe distance away, and dropped to my knees, precisely picking up the small shards of glass and putting them in my small hands. Throwing a handful away, I sank to the ground again, continuing this ritual a few more times.

"Hey-"

I had just leant down again, but startled by this unannounced voice, I placed my hand directly into the shards onto the ground, letting out a yelp. I sprung to my feet, but because of the sheer intensity of stupid I was, stepped in glass with my left foot. I turned towards Russia, lifting my foot and cradling my hand as blood trickled down them. There he stood, shocked, a dustpan in his head and a brush in the other. He dropped them immediately, the metal clanging onto ground as he froze, watching me hiss and splutter in pain.

"Sit down. I'll get the aid kit." He ordered, quickly darting away to his room. I winced, carefully hopping between the stray shards and with whatever amount of luck I had sitting onto the couch, holding my wrist tightly as the glass shone in little pieces. And it had to be my dominant hand, too, huh. I let out a groan. I try to be nice and this is what happens to me, huh?

Russia quickly returned, a white box clammed in his grip as he took seat next to me, cautiously holding the back of my hand as he grabbed a pair of tweezers from the kit, skilfully removing the small glass shards. I watched his face contort in concentration as the tip of his tongue poked out, the last bloody piece from my palm releasing my skin. He dabbed my hand with a tissue, then wrapped a clean white bandage over it.

"R-Russia?" I stuttered as he looked up, raising an eyebrow "Can I have the tweezers? My foot-" He wordlessly grabbed my leg and lifted it onto his lap, continuing picking out the shining fragments as he had done before. I simply squirmed under his touch, uncomfortable to no extent. He finally finished wrapping up the foot, before giving my knee an alerting pat. I looked up and he looked like, what I can only describe as a mother who just watched their kid climb onto the roof and fall off.

He looked past me towards the shattered window, then looked back at me, more worried than confused. "What happened?" I pulled my leg back, bouncing it a few times as I recalled what happened last night. I could almost hear the rain on the marbled floor again, despite the sun shining with its full might. "Someone broke in and tried to kill me." I choked out, the words still hardly believable to myself. Russia let out a hum, rapping his fingers against his thigh, then raised his eyebrow.

"Why were you cleaning it up?" He asked, crossing his arms as he leaned back into the couch. I paused, then turned my head toward the bathroom door. "Oh, America told me to. " This seemed to set off something in the country's brain as he threw an arm over the back of the couch, his hand balling into a fist as he glared at the aforementioned door. He then let out a long sigh, turned back toward the coffee table before the couch, and stood up with a quiet grunt, grabbing the dustpan he had dropped and starting to clean up the glass.

"R-Russia? I can just do it myself, you know.." I trailed off, watching him quickly and quietly move through the apartment. That was something to think about, how can someone so incredibly tall, be so incredibly quiet? Nevertheless, he shrugged his shoulders and ignored me.

The only sound I could hear was the sweeping of the brush and the wind outside. I silently stared at my hands as I kicked my legs back and forth. That's a sad thing of being far away from home. You don't have your usual playthings to fuck around with. Instead, you now lived like they did in the 1840s, no electronics and probably dying from some random disease at age 20, as I had done before.

It was then I realized that well.. it was *completely* quiet other than that. No rushing water, and no snoring. The people were waking. And that was going to be a whole 'nother problem.

The first to appear was America, who practically threw the door open, a cloud of steam following his pursuit. He stomped over to the dinner table, pausing, and then pointing at me with a slightly accusatory finger. "Why aren't you cleaning up, but he is?" he whined, unaware that Russia was right next to him, and frankly, looking done with his shit. "W-well I-" I raised my hand to show him, but another person entering the room removed America's attention immediately.

"Germany!" America called out, but the taller country paid him no mind. Germany sat down on the couch beside me, letting out a long huff, before turning to my bandages. "What happened?" he stated worriedly, and I reached out my hand in response. "Oh, I just got a few cuts on my hand and foot, nothing bad." I gave him a smile, and he simply raised his eyebrows, then looked behind me at America, who seemed more than shocked to be put second place in attention. "What is it?" America spluttered something unintelligible, then sighed, shrugging his shoulders. "Say, why did (Y/N) come out of your room this morning? What were you doing with her?" Germany seemed unfazed, but Russia seemed to freeze in place, standing upright with a questioning look at me.

"Well, since *your* dad broke the window and tried to stab her last night, I thought it'd be best she'd stay in my room." Germany replied, his eyes twitching slightly. America seemed taken aback, and I stared at him with wide eyes. His dad..?

"Ey, bruv, I was just doin' what America told me, he said-"

Back then, I was in such a state of shock that I hadn't realized what

the man had said. So then.. this all is.. America's fault?

I couldn't move, betrayal filled my every senses as I stared at him with a gaping mouth. The other countries seemed to look at me in confusion, before finishing what they were doing and starting to set the table for breakfast. But America didn't seem to move. He simply seemed to uneasily squirm under my horrified gaze. Germany shook me out of my trance, jabbing a finger at the table. "Come, eat."

I could barely finish my breakfast bagel, as delicious as it might have been. My eyes couldn't leave America's for a second, and the other two were starting to get a little worried. They muttered something to each other, sparing glances at me and America, before nodding to themselves, and pushing out their chairs.

"We'll leave you to it." Germany smiled nervously as he pulled Russia away to his room. With a click, America and I were left alone. He fidgeted slightly, the toe of his shoe twisting on the kitchen floor.

"Why?"

The question seemed to startle him, and he turned towards me, pushing up his sunglasses with not a single inch of nonchalant he wished to show.

"Why?"

I echoed. He pulled at his sleeves, avoiding my gaze, before sighing, flattening his hands. "Look, okay. I think you're an alien, that's how simple it is. I got my dad to try and kill you so you wouldn't threaten us. Simple as that." He crossed his arms, a pout drawing on his face.

I guess you could say 'sis snapped'.

"AN ALIEN?" I yelled, slamming my fists on the table as America stumbled back slightly, his sunglasses clattering on the floor. "YOU THREATEN MY LIFE, BREAK A WINDOW, BECAUSE YOU *THINK* I'M AN ALIEN?" Tears started welling up in my eyes. I wasn't exactly the type to yell at someone else, but with the events that

occurred, the scare that I had experienced, I think I had the right.

"You're a right dumbass." I hissed, clenching my hands into fists as tears poured over my cheeks, my face red with anger. I held myself from spluttering more insults, fearing that if I would, I'd be turned into a shooting range. America kept quiet as I silently sniffed, picking up his sunglasses and taping them back to his head.

"Listen-" the sheer intensity of my glare caused him to hesitate, but he continued "Uh- right- listen, I don't think you're an alien anymore, okay? I won't purposefully threaten your life again." I squinted at him, still angry. What kind of shitty apology is that? Nevertheless, I nodded affirmatively, sniffing loudly.

But little did I know, that piece of shit had his fingers crossed the whole time.

Chapter 8

It's pretty weird how one day you can stand there screaming at some dude and the next you're watching his kid. This was the case for me. America, Russia, and Germany were about to head off to a meeting in another town, even though it as, coincidentally, America's turn to watch Texas, his son. Of course, in turn, America dumped his kid onto me.

"..It's something you can do to pay us back!" America attempted convincing me as the little boy clutched onto his father's leg with narrowed, suspicious eyes. Germany rubbed his temples in annoyance, hastily looking at the clock every few seconds. "Listen, he's a cutie. He'll probably play for an hour or so and be knockout for the rest. We'll be back before you know it." He rubbed the top of Texas' cowboy hat, before pushing the little boy to me, hastily pulling on Germany's arm.

"Come on, let's go." America ushered, almost running out of the house with the other two, slamming the door. I paused, then looked at the child, who seemed almost uncomfortable to be standing. Before I could say anything, the boy ran off to the kitchen, pulling at the Tupperware drawers with haste, almost as if he were looking for something.

"What's wrong, Texas?" I tried sweetly, and he turned to me with big, teary eyes, his giant hat almost falling off of his head "My fidget spinner!" He cried, and I deadpanned, my mouth opening and closing like a fish on land. "Can I have my fidget spinner?" he spoke of it again. They had fidget spinners.. of course this world had *fidget spinners*. I smiled calmly, crouching down as I held back the pain in my voice "And where could it be?"

His little finger pointed to the top shelf of the pantry, and I furrowed my brows, suddenly realizing what he was doing. He wasn't going through the Tupperware, he was *pulling a staircase*. I

hummed, and grabbed a chair, standing on top of it and searching the shelf as the little boy gripped my stool, almost trembling with excitement.

There I saw the toy, picked it up, and sank down, almost having it be ripped from my hands the moment it reached his height.

And then I sat at the coffee table as Texas almost religiously spun the thing. The only thing I could hear was the annoying buzz of the wheel inside as it went around and around with its colourful red-white-blue ears. I sighed and buried my head into my arms.

Suddenly, the whirring stopped, and I raised my gaze back to Texas, who looked at me with wide eyes. I was about to ask what was wrong, before a loud growl from his belly interrupted me. He cocked his head, then grabbed my hand, pulling me back to the kitchen and to the fridge, staring at me expectantly. "..You want something to eat?" He nodded feverishly, clambering onto one of the high stools as he kicked his little feet back and forth. I sighed, pulling open the drawer and getting some bread. What do kids like.. PB&J? Do kids eat that nowadays? I silently slathered on the peanut butter as Texas watched my every move. Then, with a soft clatter, I placed the sandwich in front of him with a plate, which he happily (and loudly) munched on, humming in approval every few seconds.

His mouth full, he turned to me, a wide smile on his face. "Amewica said ye've a bitch, bu' I think yer reawwy nice!" I froze, then hesitantly patted his head. "Is that so..? I'm glad you think so." I laughed slightly awkwardly as the boy continued eating, gazing up at the clock. *Four more hours to go.. Had he really been staring at his fidget spinner for two whole hours?*

I shrugged, picked up his plate as he finished and placed it into the sink. Excitedly, Texas ran up to me and hugged my legs, smiling up at me. I smiled back, confused, and crouched down to his eye-level. The boy tugged at my sleeve, pointing towards America's room. "Come-Come! I wanna show you something!" the kid rambled as he continued pestering my clothing. I stood up and let him grab my hand and pull me towards the dumbass' hideout as he giggled mischievously, almost kicking the door open.

What I saw inside was something I could describe as a circa 2009 emo teenager's room. A black bed, walls, and an almost blood red carpeted floor. I almost chortled as I looked around, making sure the kid didn't break anything.

Texas rummaged through his father's many drawers, letting out soft mumbles as he searched. Finally, he squealed, and pulled out a Nintendo DS from a bottom drawer of America's closet. The boy presented it as if it was a holy artefact, then rushed out of the room and plopped onto the couch, letting out a small 'oof!' as he did. He motioned his little hands to come join him, and I sat next to him, watching him start up and play 'Pokemon Black 2', erasing America's file as he did.

I smiled down at the boy as he asked me for advice every so often, pointing at a 'Purrloin' or a 'Venipede' and asking me if he should catch it. I, in honesty, knew little to nothing about the game, so I simply said "He looks *really* strong!" at almost every suggestion.

Slowly, I started dozing off as Texas got more into his game. The soft bleeps of Castelia city luring me into a deep slumber.

The sound of a door opening and closing woke me up, and I half-heartedly opened one eye to see Russia enter the living room, alone. He paused, and stared at us with a dumbfounded expression on his face. It was then I realized that there were no sounds of pokemon beside me, only soft snoring and a tight grip on my arm. I moved my head to look down, and there Texas lay, curled up against me as the DS was gripped into his little hands. A soft smile involuntarily pulled onto my face as I gave the small boy a soft pat on his head, before turning back to Russia who seemed to be seconds away from laughing. I put a finger against my lips, then motioned to the door behind him. Russia merely shrugged and whispered "They were going to stay longer and have dinner with the other countries." I nodded, leant back into the couch, and sighed, content with how this day was going.

But that wouldn't be for long.

Alright, I lied before. *This* will be my last Author's Note in this book

That's because I have made an alternative book for it, so that I wouldn't clutter up all my current ones.

This is the link for it:

<https://www.wattpad.com/709150446-author%27s-notes-book-welcome-to-the-author%27s-note>

Go ham.

Namaste.

Chapter 9

The faint clunking of pans in the kitchen rose me from my slumber. I lifted my head slightly, blinking the blariness from my eyes as I made out Russia, his form illuminated by the light in the stove's hood. The darkness of nightfall huddled in the furthest corners of the room, scared by the faint light emitting from the kitchen.

A faint shuffling by my side alerted me of the younger human clutched to my arm. Texas let out a few incoherent mumbles, before squeezing my arm and gazing up with big, tired eyes. "...Ma, can you tell Russia to keep it down?" I opted to ignore the first used word, instead patting his large brown hat with soft movements "...No, Texas, he's making dinner. You should be up, or else you can't sleep at night." The boy squirmed a little, before pushing his little body away from mine and hopping off the couch, trotting towards Russia with a slightly sluggish pace.

I couldn't hear their exact conversation, but the familiar tone of Russia alerted me that Texas was indeed talking to him. I heard a long silence, before an amused "...*is she now?*" caught my attention, I sat up straight, leaning my body in the direction of the kitchen to catch their conversation, before Russia peeked around at me as well, raising an eyebrow, before whispering something else to Texas. The kid seemed to perk up, before running back to me, tugging the sleeve of my sweater

"Miss (Y/N), miss (Y/N)!" Texas chirped, nearly pulling me off of the couch "Mister Rus- Mister Russia said that if you set the table, I can go into America's room and do what I want! So *pleaaase?*" He clasped his little hands together, and I had to stifle my laughter. With an amused smile, I nodded. "Alright, off you go, then." The boy's cheer echoed through the hallway as he darted off, leaving me back on the couch all alone.

I let out a long sigh, slowly raising myself from the soft sofa and stretching my arm above my head. I dropped my limb back as I

slowly made it over to the kitchen, pulling out three white porcelain plates with small clutters. My gaze dropped from the china as I looked over at Russia, who simply gazed at me with an amused twinkle in his eye. He didn't say anything, but instead turned away and simply continued stirring in his pan. I shrugged, walking over to the dining table and placing the plates down, soft clatters ringing after I did.

As I rummaged through the silverware drawer, I heard Texas' call. I turned towards Russia questioningly, who simply returned the glance with a faint shrug of his shoulders. Carefully, I placed the cutlery on the table, slowly opening the door to find Texas-

With a gun.

"T-Texas?" I was a bit taken aback. I mean, it isn't every day that you see a young kid with such a confident smile on his face holding a lethal firearm. The boy seemed to bounce where he stood, showing off his weapon with the greatest kind of glee. "Look! Look! Dad told me where to find it, and how to use it, too!"

"D-did he now?" I smiled nervously, slowly backing away from the door "W-well, that's very nice and all, but maybe you should put it down. Dinner's almost ready and-" "Don't you wanna see how well I can use it?" the crestfallen look on his face broke my heart into little pieces, and I almost gave in. *Almost*.

"After dinner, you can" I told him sternly. Texas did not seem in the slightest bit happy with that. He stomped his foot on the ground, the zipper on his cowboy boot rustling with the movement. "No-no!" he nearly shrieked, causing me to back up from the doorway. "I wanna show you, now!" I was about to stop him, but it was too late.

He lifted the gun towards me. Blood rushed in my ears as my senses disappeared and my fight-or-flight instincts kicked on. I couldn't hear anything, my brain couldn't sense anything, but I was lucky my body stepped aside when it did. I watched the bullet fly through the air, the dull silver reflecting the light back from the kitchen.

Then I felt pressure on my arm.

It didn't hurt, or it didn't hurt yet, but it caused me to look up, in the fuzz of my mind wondering if it were Texas poking me for attention.

Oh how I wish it was.

Instead, I saw a gash along my arm, it was dark red, with the same colour liquid bubbling up inside of it, starting to pour along my elbow onto my wrist and down to the ground. Then the pain began. A sharp burn, like a blister, then started increasing to what I could imagine a bee's sting to feel like.

I don't remember dropping to my knees, or laying on the ground, but that sure was what I was doing right now. I squirmed uncomfortably, trying to move my hand to touch the blood, but my body kept still, ignoring my every command. My surroundings blurred, I heard shouting, crying, then nothing.

No, not nothing.

I heard so much at the same time, I had to ignore it until it was nothing. Darkness was all around me, whipping and pulling me like a stubborn gust of wind on a breezy autumn's day. I tried to fight against its pull, but my feet lost its grounding, flinging me upwards.

My weightlessness was short lived, as my body collided against sandy ground with a loud thud. I let out a long groan, clenching my fists as I fought off dizziness. I could barely open my eyes as I felt a shadow move over my eyelids, but my initial paralysation quickly wore off as I saw who it was.

"Welcome back."

It was.. me?

Well, it didn't look entirely like me. It seemed to be taller, wiser, and had a more dominant energy. But it was still *me*. I scrambled to my feet as the other watched me, my mouth gaping open and closed, before finally sputtering something out.

"Who are you?"

The person quirked an eyebrow, folding her arms, before letting out a long sigh "So you don't remember me again, huh? Some day you'll be able to latch on." Her weight shifted to her other foot, her dress gliding over her features slightly. "I am the Keeper, I am the only key between the mortal world and the afterlife." Her fingers slightly tapped her arm, before she shrugged slightly, turning away from me as her cape bellowed behind her. "Come, I have much to tell you."

Chapter 10

The soft chirping of birdsong in a place that felt close yet distant was the only thing able to ground me in this current reality. I followed the Keeper as we trudged along a stone path through a lush, seemingly lively garden. Yet, every time I thought to see an animal, it would vanish from the corner of my eye, leaving nothing but an observation in its wake.

My eyes kept drawing back to the Keeper. There was something off about her. It wasn't that she was particularly threatening, but it was more about the clothes that she wore. It was a simple outfit, really. A wine red dress with golden highlights around the chest. But that wasn't my point of interest, it was her *cape* that worried me. It was a jet black, no, it was darker than that. Any nearby light seemed to be swallowed by its gaping darkness. However, I felt familiarity in it. As if I had seen it before, but I wasn't able to put my finger on it. I was forced to tear my gaze away from it. It had the ability to lock one in a trance, perhaps one I would never be able to break out of. I didn't exactly feel like finding that out, though.

The Keeper didn't speak during our walk, leaving only the sound of rushing water from the nearby fountain to drown out my thoughts. However, this fountain was of no use. I was still confused, worried, scared. Had I died? She said she was the key between the mortal world and the afterlife so.. Did one wound really kill me?

The Keeper led me into a gazebo-like construction, instead of wood however, it had white marble pillars. In the middle, there was a table, two wooden picnic chairs on either side and an unfinished game of chess in the middle. The Keeper swiped her hand, and the chess pieces lined up to their starting places. I stood in wonder, watching the pieces float and land, before a cough interrupted my amazement.

"(Y/N), please, take a seat." The Keeper mumbled, pulling out a chair at the white player's end. I sat down, sinking into the red

velvet cushion as she took seat opposite of me, folding her hands as she watched me with a curious, yet tired gaze. I looked at the chess game, rapping my fingers against the wooden table as she began.

"(Y/N), we are going to play a one game of chess. You may ask me one question per turn. If you win, I will send you back without any further complications, and grant you swift healing. However, if I win, I will send you back, but cause you one problem that I cannot guarantee your survival from." I froze, looking up at her "But why would you do that?" I asked her, and she rolled her eyes "...I'm getting quite tired of you coming up here every other day, (Y/N). I just wish for you to either cross to the afterlife, or don't. I am not a hotel." Still confused, I nodded, gazing at my pieces with a concentrated gaze.

Oh, I should note that.. I don't really know how chess works.

My fingers grazed a white pawn, moving it two steps to F4. The Keeper seemed.. interested, by my move, and raised her gaze to look at me, leaning on her hand. "...Did I die?" I asked her. Her interest dropped in a second. "Every time you've come here, you've asked that question. Can't you think of something better?" She leaned back, crossing her arms "No, you're not dead. You're what the mortals call... in a coma. You're not alive, nor are you dead." She leant forward, moving her pawn to E6, her gaze starting to lift to me. "You can ask anything during my turn, too."

I startled at this, a little taken aback, then fished for words, my mouth opening and closing as I sputtered incoherent sentences. I finally sighed, concentrated, and spoke again "You've said we met before, yet I don't remember any of it, how does that work?" This seemed to amuse the chessmate, and she shook her head "Right into the juicy stuff, huh? I see how it is." She hummed and squinted her eyes, breathing in slightly "I am a part of you- of every mortal. You have chosen to forget me to save yourself the trouble of remembering. Every time we've met, you had entered a state of disassociation. A state where you have removed yourself from your humanity. You have made the choice to forget the inhumanity, and focus on yourself as a person. Respectable in its own, but frankly tiring to have to reintroduce myself every time."

I nodded silently, moving a new pawn to G4. The Keeper shifted slightly, which caught my attention, but I didn't react to it, as her face seemed blank. "Why did I move from my own world to theirs?" I asked her, and she clacked her tongue "Well, you see, your life was being wasted in your own realm." My attention heightened at her words, and I looked at her quizzically, prompting her to continue "You had no friends, no family. All you did was work. No hobbies, no fun nights out. It was a shame to see one with so much potential wasting her life like that. So, I took it into my own hands to get you to a better place, one where you could be.. more of use, so to say." "So you were the one who-" she held up her finger, signalling silence, a smug look on her face "One question per turn, I said."

I watched her movements closely. She seemed to take her sweet time lifting her queen, and moving it to H4. Wait.. I followed the queen's movement, then looked at my king. Oh, no..

"Checkmate."

Her tone seemed almost teasing, mocking me for my fatal mistakes. I looked at the board, attempting to shuffle its pieces, but they seemed stuck to the playing area. A strong wind picked up, causing the trees and bushes around us to shake and swerve. The last thing I could see was a widely drawn smirk on her face. And then, as if a light switch flicked,

It was dark.

Chapter 11 (Q&A on A/N book)

I feel.. nothing. The darkness that swerved around me wasn't familiar. It was cold, dense, choking.. It wasn't the void, but it seemed similar. I couldn't see, I couldn't feel, I couldn't taste.. but for once, I could hear. I heard murmurs in the distance. They were almost unintelligible, but I could make out snippets of conversation.

"Do you think that she'll.."

"In a few days.. maybe a week.."

"The storm's date has been moved from mon..."

"I'm sorry.."

That was a phrase I heard often. It was the only thing that reminded me that I wasn't here for just a moment, I was here for a few days. Through the conversations that wiggled around me, I would always hear that apology, but I couldn't make out who it was that said it.

As the days went on, with no clear judgement of day and night, my head kept becoming lighter. It was as if the density of the darkness was slowly lifting, letting me gradually move upwards. I don't know what was above me, but it was calling me with no words. I reached my hands out in front of me, paddling my legs as I swam to the ceiling of wherever this was. The murmurs around me grew louder and louder, until they reached their point of a frantic static in my head. I pinched my eyes shut to end the pain and make it stop..!

And then, it was silent.

I cautiously peeked open one eye, before shutting it immediately. Blaring, white lights entered my vision and nearly blinded me. I tried to lift my arm, but it didn't move. It felt as if a heavy stone was keeping it down to whatever I was lying on. I tried the other one, and successfully raised it so I could shield my eyes.

I squinted my eyes open again, letting my eyes slowly adjust to the light as I took in my surroundings. At first, it just seemed like a very white version of what I was in before, but finally, as my eyes peeled open fully, I realized I was in a hospital room.

My head slowly turned around as I inspected the place. It was small, had white walls and teal marbled flooring. The curtain was drawn open to show a pale blue sky outside. I was confused.. why exactly was I here, again?

And that's when it all came flooding back to me.

The.. shooting! Texas shot me, I remember now. But how did I get all the way here? And.. gunshot wounds don't end up in comas, right? What's the deal with that? I looked over at my injured arm. It was hooked to an IV drip, with the wound coiled in a clean bandage. I looked to my other side, jumping a little when I noticed that someone was there.

At first, I didn't recognize him, but after further inspection- which boiled down to me squinting at him for several minutes- I realized that it was America, with his head buried on the unoccupied space of my bed and fast asleep. I slowly brought my hand upwards, hovering it over America's head as I screamed on the inside. How the hell do you fix a situation like this? Do you.. pet them? Shake them awake? Let's try shake them awake.

I slowly moved my hand towards his shoulder, giving him a soft shake "A-America, please.." I muttered. No response. Okay, how about a bit harder? Nothing. At my wits end, I shouted "America!" as I gave him one hard shove, sending him toppling to the floor. Now that woke him up.

He almost scrambled to his feet frantically, trying to readjust his sunglasses as he stood up straight. I leaned a bit away from him as he stared at me for a few seconds, before apparently realizing what he was seeing, and grinning widely.

"You're awake!" He cheered, causing me to feel a little taken aback. Isn't this the same dude who told his kid to kill 'bitches' like me and

accused me of being an alien. He noted my surprised expression, and immediately dropped his happiness to surprise, worry, then guilt. He sat back down on his chair, leaning his elbows on the place he had previously been resting his head as he looked up at me. I just silently frowned at him, feeling uncomfortable as I held my fist to my chest.

"Why.. Why are you here?" I asked him, avoiding his gaze immediately. He cleared his throat, clasping his hands together as his eyes never left my face. "I wanted to.. be here when you woke up so I can.. take responsibility and.." His words started to get strained as he gritted his teeth "Say.. sorry.." I finally looked back at him, raising my eyebrows "Sorry, what for?"

"Well.." He took a deep breath, bowing his head as he stared at his hands "I *may* have told Texas to attempt to shoot you if he.. could.." He let out a short breath, and I spluttered to find words "Y-you- but I- but you- *what*?" He raised up his hands in defeat, shrugging his shoulders "Now I *know* I said I'd stop doing this whole 'trying to kill you' thing.. but I wanted to have one last chance at victory. Turns out the doctors said you're not an alien and I'm an idiot so I'm.." He gritted his teeth again "Sooo-rry.."

"I don't care about your sorries." I suddenly spat, feeling rage boil up inside of me again as I glared at him "Do you know how irresponsible you are? Texas is a young, impressionable child! You're teaching him that violence is okay, and that killing people should be seen as something mild! How fucking *stupid* are you!" He winced, looking away "Plus! You promised you'd leave me alone! And here I am, in a hospital, because *your* child shot me with a fucking gun. A GUN, AMERICA. I don't want you interacting with him in that way ever again, you got it?!"

"Yeah, yeah.. I'm so-" I cut him off again "Stop saying sorry if you don't mean it!" He kept quiet, staring at me with a conflicted look. I sighed, rubbing the bridge of my nose "..How is he?" I muttered. "H-huh? How's who?" "Texas, how is he?" America let out an exasperated sigh "He's.. a little shaken up. He doesn't like blood all that much. But other than that he's fine. He.. misses you" I nodded, a little surprised at the last part "..Good.."

Silence filled the room, until America cleared his throat and stood up "Welp! I guess I'm off! Gotta.. do some stuff, y'know!" He walked over to the door, looking back at me, but I just glared at him "Haha! Alright, see ya!" And gone he was, leaving me alone with my thoughts.

What a fucking idiot, he was.

Chapter 12

[image]

I want to preface this chapter with an author's note. You can scroll past this if you want, I don't mind all too much, since I dislike writing them just as much as you dislike reading them.

I am sorry for not updating for so long. Writing is not a daily necessity for me, and as of late I have been very focused on keeping myself alive. I am not in the proper mental state to do any sort of writing, especially to a such mentally taxing book as this one. However, I did promise I would finish this book, and I will.. in my due time. As much as I cannot rush my plotline, I also cannot rush myself. I appreciate the support, but I do ask of you to stay patient. Adding to my problems, I have also started another book that I enjoy writing as well. I'm not at all prioritizing one over the other, but I did write those chapters whilst ignoring this book for about a week. I'm very sorry for not letting myself heard or writing any updates on this story for nearly 2 months. It was unprofessional of me and I promise it will not happen again. However at this time I am still in a very very bad mental state, and am still trying to recover from the recent events, so I cannot promise a near-daily update as I used to do. Maybe weekly, or twice a week, at best.

There have been many problems plaguing my daily life, but if you wish to stay up to date with either me, my story, or just if you want to speak to fellow countryhumans fans, I would suggest joining the discord server I am an admin on. Though this is the link, I cannot assure it works. DM me if it does not <https://discord.gg/fPCZTnK>, the external link should be somewhere else on this document as well.

Without further ado, I present to you chapter 12. I hope it is alright.

Breathe in, breathe out.

Echo of the heart, soul, and mind. Collective in the fields that have shaped our barren hearts and our wicked bodies. I hear their song, the song of the seekers. Their hooves clack against a surface of wheat and grass, and They approach me. "This is the one we seek?" The creature asked, Their language non-existent, yet is one I could speak. "Yes, it is the one with power." "But, it is so similar to the others. What makes it different from them, from *her*?" The large cloak billowed around the Seeker's body, and it seemed amused with the younger one's speech "It is not appearances that make one different, Tamer. It is their heart, their motivation, the voice that answers when one calls. It knows our language, it knows our name." The Tamer's black eyes turned towards me, filled with the void I was familiar with, void.. void.. "It isn't ready." Tamer spoke, their voice doubling "It is not ready to take its title. We must leave, before it hears more." "Oh, Tamer." Seeker stepped in front of Them, Their long and wispy tail lashing "It can always hear us, it just chooses to not listen."

And with a startle, I awake back in my hospital bed. Chooses not to listen? What were They talking about? I slowly sit up, before a bolt of pain shoots through my arm, reminding me of my pained state. Right, the bullet wound. I gently rub my arm, trying to get the pain to lessen as I thought back on the two new revealed creatures. Tamer, and Seeker.. their name was similar to Keeper, wasn't it? Could it be that they are related somehow? Though the last time I checked, Keeper was just a darker version of me, and not a humanoid beastly figure with a long billowing cloak. Then again, I haven't heard from Keeper in a while. I must wonder what Keeper's intentions are, seeing as she had promised my uncertain demise. I pushed the thought to the back of my head, deciding to focus on the here and the now as I glanced around my room, curious to find something to do in my pained state. The sad thing was, the room was primarily empty, save from the completely necessary; IV drip, heart monitor, such of the like. I sighed, resting my head back onto the pillow as I quietly waited for the day to pass by and make me fall asleep again. Anything to cut out this boredom.

"I have arrived!" America loudly announced as he burst through the door. "Mom!" Texas squealed, running past him and jumping onto my bed as he tightly hugged me, despite the searing pain in my

arm. "Mom?" America echoed his son, stepping aside as Germany and Russia made their way in, a small smile mounted on Germany's face. "H-Hey Tex." I managed to stutter to the child, who excitedly sat on my lap, waving the America's DS around "Look- look I caught the- the legendary and then I battled.. the.. the el-yeet four!" He nodded excitedly, showing me what he had done on the small black device as I smiled slightly "Good job, Texas!" I pat the small boy's head, giving a little sigh as I turned to smile at the other three. "Thank you for taking such good care of me, you three." I mumbled, letting Texas lean on my chest and play as Germany tilted his head "Why of course, (Y/N). It would be cruel of us to just let you bleed out an die, no?" I shrugged slightly, wrapping my arms around Texas "I don't know, I'm just not too used to human kindness, I guess." I spoke with a soft sadness in my voice. Germany nodded understandably, though Russia looked a little conflicted. "Were they not kind to you, where you were from?" He asked, and I shook my head "It's not that, it's just that.. I didn't really *talk* to anyone, per say. I just existed, and that doesn't make people be nice to me." "You lead a lonely life." He remarked wistfully, and I just shrugged in response "If it doesn't harm me, then why should I fix what isn't broken?" A long silence befell us, and I just uncomfortably looked away.

"Well, let's just move past that." America grinned slightly, pressing his sunglasses up a little as he stuffed his hands into his hoodie's pockets "So, I had some rad news to share. " "Rad?" I asked him, tilting my head curiously as he cleared his throat "*Radical.*" He paused, before continuing "So, we got the go-to from the doctors to come pick you up from the hospital." A spark of hope surged through my system as I looked at them with happy eyes "Does that mean I can leave now?" I asked them, but they shook their heads slowly "No, but Germany can come pick you up tomorrow!" "Wait, I can do what?" Germany shot him an annoyed look, but America just stuck out his tongue teasingly "America, my schedule is very full.. I've got no time to.. to.." He trailed off as he slowly looked at my crestfallen face, his brows furrowing. He let out a small sigh, pouting a little to himself, before huffing "Fine, yes, I'll come and pick you up tomorrow." I smiled brightly at Germany, giving Texas a half-hearted pat on the head as he shoved his game into my face.

"You do have to watch out for the snowstorm, though." I remarked quietly. "But that's not due for what, another week?" America replied, gazing outside to the sunny, spotless sky. "Well, I guess.. but that doesn't mean that you can't watch out. The road can get slippery n' stuff." Russia nodded in agreement, facing the others "You aren't as used to the cold, so be careful." He mumbled, uncharacteristically affectionate in his neutral demeanour. I smiled, happy to see that everything would be fine, I would go back with them, and we could go back to finding what would bring me back home. Tomorrow..

Tomorrow, everything would be fine again.

Very Important note

Hello everyone who has read this fic.

Wow, it's uh, been a bit, huh? As has probably been noticed, I have been very very absent from the platform. This is for a few reasons, that I would really like to get into today. Please note that I am not attacking anyone in particular or out to cause harm in any way, I just felt that it was wrong to leave the book on an open end, especially when I promised a return.

First of all, I am so very honoured for all the attention this fanfiction has been getting. I never expected this to blow up as it did, and I'm very happy to see that the majority of the readers enjoyed it. Of course personally, it's a little bit cringy to read back, but this fic has become a very important part of my history as a writer and I have all of you to thank for it. There have been so many kind comments that have been motivating me even now to continue persevering as a writer and some genuinely funny people who have been able to make me laugh on a bad day. Even now I still get notifications that people are reading this fic and giving it those little stars and it warms my heart every time I see it.

However, I do come with bad news. I'm officially discontinuing this

fic. This is for a few reasons that I also desperately want to list here. Again, I feel incredibly cruel to be doing this as I was very passionate about the story before. I had a great big plot thought out and still think about from time to time but as it stands now I cannot continue it. If you feel betrayed or hurt by this, I completely understand. You can simply close the page, remove it from your library or what else, and call it a day and I wouldn't blame you for that. However, I do want to list my reasons why.

There'll be three major points I'll be going over in this next section, the last being the most important for those still in the Countryhumans fandom to this day.

Firstly, Wattpad is an absolute garbage platform for me to use. For those who didn't know, I am neurodivergent. In my experience using both the app and the site I have severely struggled feeling organized and at ease with how I use it. The major part of this is attributed to the ads, which I feel physically sick from seeing. I won't go into detail as to what I have or how the site as a whole contributes to my dislike of it as for many it's a perfectly fine site, it's just not for me. I've also been logged out of my account on my phone and haven't been able to log back in because the site wrongfully logged my e-mail account so that's cool, I guess.

Second, I've moved on to bigger and better things. I'm an active streamer and youtuber now, I've got a whole career in art set up and simply don't have any more time to spend on this fanfiction in particular, especially seeing as I've left the fandom two years ago.

And that's where I get into the third part, the fandom.

You all have given me an incredibly wonderful time. I have never felt so close to people as I have during my time in this fandom. However there's the elephant in the room that we simply cannot ignore. The shipping, stereotyping, and blatant racism that happens in the fandom. We've all as a whole turned a blind eye to it in favor of having fun, and though I really can't fault you for taking comfort in drawing and talking about silly colorful characters doing silly things, you can't just forget that these are real countries they're based off of. Why do you think Hetalia as a whole is regarded as problematic, too?

Please take it from me, as a former CH creator, to hyperfixate on a different fandom as soon as you can. I'm an adult now, and seeing back the things I've said and done due to being in the fandom still makes me cringe. The people are great, but the content is so blatantly problematic that it's just a sad sight. I could go into every problem the countryhumans fandom has, but I'd be here all day and I don't want to upset anyone. Again, I want to reiterate that I understand you taking comfort in all of this. It was cute and fun at first, but it's simply just not a good thing to get into. Hell, even this fic has a whole load of issues that directly contribute to the problems I have with the content in the fandom, but I've made my bed and I must lie in it.

So, that's that. I'm sorry for going off a bit, I just wanted to make myself abundantly clear. I won't be deleting this fic as there's a lot of things I like to look back on just to see how simple times used to be. Rereading the kind and funny comments you all have left for me is always the highlight of a day, and again I'm so very thankful for all the positive energy you've all been sending. I hope you understand and respect my decision that I've taken today. It felt wrong to drop everything and vanish without a final goodbye.

If there's anything y'all need from me, either a convo or just to see where I've disappeared off to, please check out my Archive of Our Own account, TyrantQueen. I'll be posting to my fanfic there from time to time if you want to see any of my future work, and I'll be checking any messages there. Wattpad isn't really an option for contact anymore since I have such limited accessibility to it :')

And with that, the reign of Emperor Scottie ends.

Take care, darlings :)